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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001820

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: LONG ODDS IN SUNDAY'S ELECTION

REF: ANKARA 1797

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, for Reasons 1.4 (b),d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Opinion polls appear to have coalesced around the idea that only three parties will enter parliament in the wake of Turkey's July 22 general election. However, given the notorious unreliability of opinion polls here, several long-shot parties taking a "hail Mary" pass could do better than predicted and cross the 10 percent threshold, while shoo-ins could do unexpectedly worse. END SUMMARY

Democrat Party In?

12. (C) As the undecideds start to make up their minds, Democrat Party (DP) chairman Mehmet Agar could be proven right that his party can still cross the 10 percent threshold into parliament (reftel). Currently stuck at around 6-7 percent in the polls, DP may tap its traditional reserves in rural areas ignored by pollsters. DP may benefit from some of the "I can't stand Baykal" vote abandoning the Republican People's Party (CHP). The more pious portion of the stalwart center-right Anavatan/Motherland voters (whose party has withdrawn from the election) might go to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), but some who pay heed to the moderate tone of DP's election manifesto will likely go to DP, as may some fed up with polarization of the parties in parliament. DP's entering parliament also depends on Agar successfully getting out the message, "Don't NOT vote for DP because you fear your vote may be wasted." In the event of a four-party parliament, depending on the seat distribution, AKP could potentially just retain single-party government, but DP could also be a potential coalition partner.

Genc (Youth) Party In?

13. (C) An Istanbul economist recently told us that his driver claimed he would vote for Genc because party chairman Cem Uzan, who bilked Motorola for \$2 billion, had succeeded in "sticking it" to an American company. When we recounted this anecdote to several contacts, all said they had heard similar stories. We have also heard rumors from several sources that through the wealthy, pious confectioner family Ulker, AKP is directing some support in Genc's direction to help split the opposition; Asli Aydintasbas tells us that AKP was

deliberately leaving Genc alone until this week to allow it to sap MHP strength. Genc is competing with Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and CHP for the populist nationalist vote; but for voters fed up with all parties in parliament and specifically with CHP leader Baykal for leading an ineffective opposition, populist Genc may be a last-minute, at-the-ballot-box choice. Its presence in parliament would not be a constructive one (GP is the only party to not publish an election platform but instead to run on the sloganeering of its leader Uzan and reflected glow of superstar candidate Ibrahim Tatlis), but could give an edge to an anti-AKP coalition.

MHP out?

¶4. (C) Conventional wisdom holds that MHP is a safe bet on Sunday -- they have played this up themselves -- but a few polls still show the ossified party with the uninspiring leader below the election threshold. In such a case, a renewed two-party parliament (AKP and CHP) is conceivable, probably with each claiming an enhanced mandate percentage-wise, and AKP potentially holding a majority large enough to change the constitution. Right-wing nationalist votes not cast for MHP might be redirected to GP or possibly even the more moderate DP.

¶5. (C) COMMENT. In an election where minuscule margins may have large impact, fairness of voting and accuracy of counting -- for which there is a high degree of confidence in Turkey, although minor, isolated problems have occurred in the past -- will be all the more important. Seat distribution will depend somewhat on the independents, whose

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success will eat into the tallies of both AKP and CHP. However, the main factor affecting seat distribution is the number of parties entering parliament; if a party achieves 10 percent of the national vote, it might get 40-80 seats, but if it gets 9.99 percent, the number of seats is zero. Past election outcomes like 2002's stunning failure of all but two parties to cross the 10 percent threshold, or 1999's surprise success for MHP catching the "Hang Ocalan" wave at the edge of legislative oblivion are an important reminder that in Turkey, polling is poor and voting is volatile. END COMMENT.

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